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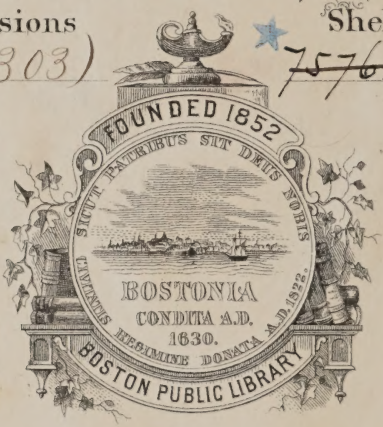

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APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

IN BEHALF OF

THE PENITENT FEMALES REFUGE.

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TO THE PUBLIC

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THE PENITENT FEMALES REFUGE

IN THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

BOSTON:
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1839.

From D.R.

APPEAL.

The Directors of the Boston Penitent Females Refuge deem it a duty which they owe to the charity they have in charge, to present its claims to the benevolent consideration of the public. They are abundantly satisfied, from long experience, that they are engaged in a good work; and the efforts which their limited means have so far enabled them to make, have been so manifestly successful, that they feel not only encouraged, but urged to perseverance.

For obvious reasons, this charity has not been often, nor familiarly obtruded upon the public notice; nor have its claims upon the pecuniary contributions of the Christian and philanthropist been presented so frequently and so earnestly as circumstances have demanded, and as the importance of the object would have justified.

The Directors entertain the confident belief that the institution needs only to be known, in its operations and effects, to be fully appreciated by those who have at heart as well the temporal melioration of human wo, as the eternal welfare of immortal souls. It is with this view—and being impressed with the conviction that the salutary effects of their labors hitherto, more than justify past exer-

tions, and call upon them for renewed efforts—that the Directors have determined to present to the public a general view of the institution, and of its progress and results.

The Refuge was commenced in the year 1821. At first it was only contemplated to receive such abandoned females as were desirous of an opportunity to forsake their wretched course of life, and retain them no longer than was necessary to test the sincerity of their professed desire to reform, and provide other suitable places for them. It was not the original design of the institution, nor has it ever been the expectation of its friends, to extirpate the wide spread evil of licentious profligacy. The aim has been, not to work a general reformation, but to furnish opportunities and means to those who would gladly strive to retrace their steps, before the guilty conscience is seared, and the final ruin of the body and soul accomplished.

In furtherance of this limited design, such measures have been adopted, as the counsels and experience of those who have coöperated in the management of the institution have suggested, and as the peculiar character of the object would permit. The result of these efforts, it is difficult, from the nature of the circumstances, to present to the public in any very distinct form. The general success, it is confidently asserted, has been such as to confirm the hopes and expectations which gave rise to the institution; and such as, in the opinion of those who have long made it a subject of anxious care and effort, entitle it to a high place among objects of moral and Christian benevolence.

The inherent difficulty of conducting a charity of this description, and the various embarrassments which must ever impede the best directed efforts, it is believed, are not duly estimated by the public in making up a judgment in reference to the beneficial results to be expected from such an institution as the Refuge; while, at the same time, these difficulties and embarrassments present the strongest

claims upon benevolent interposition in behalf of the peculiarly debased, forlorn, and miserable class, to whom the door of every other refuge is effectually closed.

When it is considered that those who fall into the vices which render them proper subjects of the care of the Refuge, are for the most part the children of vicious and degraded parents, or orphans early exposed to the most corrupting influences—that their mental and moral culture has been almost entirely neglected—and that a severe, though perhaps just law of social life has at last visited them with irretrievable dishonor and exile from society; some idea may be formed of the difficulties to be encountered in accomplishing the design of the Penitent Females Refuge, which is, to save victims thus lost, to bring back to the path of virtue beings thus hardened and forsaken by those without whose sympathy life itself becomes almost an insupportable burden.

The condition of fallen woman is proverbially considered hopeless. However erroneous this opinion may be, it still prevails to such a degree as almost entirely to exclude this unhappy class from the sympathies and benevolence of the Christian community. It is in this way only that the general apathy on the subject can be accounted for. The Directors, however, indulge a hope that the statements which may be exhibited in this Report, and a candid examination into the claims of the institution, which they earnestly invite, will result in multiplying friends to the cause and adding new strength to the hands of those to whom its direction has been intrusted.

As has been remarked, the Refuge was commenced in 1821. During the first four years of its operations, however, the Society possessed no means of applying that system of remedial or reformatory efforts which is now permanently established. In 1824, the house now occupied by the Society was purchased and fitted up for the purposes in view, and an essential change made in the

plan of operations. Instead of the temporary watchfulness and care at first exercised by the Society, arrangements were made for continuing the inmates in the Refuge a much longer time, accustoming them to regular and industrious habits, and supplying them with the means of intellectual and religious culture; thus applying the means most likely, under the divine blessing, to effect radical reformation of character—sympathy, employment, and instruction.

The period from which the history of the Refuge should be dated, is the beginning of the year 1824. At that time the occupancy of the present house was commenced, and the new system of measures went into operation. The number of inmates in the house then was *thirteen*, and *one hundred and twenty* have been received since, making the total number who have been under the care of the institution, *one hundred and thirty-three.* This number is exclusive of such as have been from time to time received and discharged again immediately or very soon afterwards, as being unsuitable subjects for the Society's care. Of this whole number *sixty-five* have been placed at service, after having remained in the house a sufficient time to have tested, in the opinion of the superintendents, the sincerity and thoroughness of their reformation, and to have afforded them all the benefits of the orderly and industrious habits, and the moral and religious influence of the Refuge. The number restored to their friends is *twenty-one.* These also were, on their dismission, regarded as having reformed, and as no longer requiring the restraining and salutary influences peculiar to the institution. The number who have eloped or who have been dismissed for gross misconduct, is *thirty-five.* These two descriptions of subjects are properly classed together, and considered as irreclaimable. There now remain in the house *twelve*, a smaller number than usual. Of these it is not now the time to speak, but most of them give strong

encouragement for the belief that they will profit by the opportunity which this institution has afforded them of returning from the downward road to vice and misery to the path of virtue, respectability, and comfort.

But there is another class of cases, to which the Directors take more pleasure in alluding, as affording them the highest degree of encouragement to perseverance in their efforts, and as calling for devout gratitude to Him to whom all glory belongs, and whose blessing alone can give success to any human efforts. This class includes *twenty-one* individuals, who are regarded as having not only effected a permanent reformation in outward moral conduct, but as having experienced that more radical and important change, the blessed effects of which have reference not merely to the life that now is, but to that which is to come.

It may be remarked, in this connection, as an extraordinary fact, and one which, it is fair to infer, may have some bearing upon the character of the means employed in the management of the Refuge, that not a single death has occurred among the inmates, since the institution went into operation in its present form, a period of more than fifteen years.

The proportion of inmates of the Refuge represented in the foregoing statement as having reformed, exhibits probably as great an amount of beneficial influence as results from any benevolent efforts with which those of the Refuge may be compared. In view especially of the difficulties and embarrassments to which allusion has been made, the Directors cannot but regard the result as answering every reasonable expectation of success.

The number thus rescued from abject misery and certain destruction, is indeed small, compared with the multitude who are daily pursuing the path which leads down to the chambers of death. But it is enough to stimulate the Directors and friends of the institution to

increase the interest and care which they bestow upon it; and enough, as they conceive, to excite the much needed coöperation of those whom Providence has blessed with pecuniary ability to relieve the distressed, to save the morally lost, and restore the outcast victim of an insidious vice to comparative comfort and respectability in this life, and to that probation which may be to the salvation of the soul.

Cases not unfrequently occur in which young females resort to the Refuge, who have followed evil courses a short time only. Having passed merely the threshold of iniquity, their eyes have been opened to their guilt and danger, and they have seized the first interval of sober and serious reflection, to embrace the opportunity which the Refuge only can afford them, of retracing their fatal steps. Such cases, it is obvious, are most likely to result in reformation, and restoration to virtue. For such cases alone the Refuge would be a desideratum; and such cases will be multiplied in proportion to the increase of the ability of the institution to receive them. Thousands who fall suddenly from virtue, would gladly embrace the first moment of remorse and consciousness of danger, to retreat from the gulf into which they find themselves plunging, if they could see any opportunity of doing so. But the customs and prejudices of society offer them no encouragement. Nothing but the kind charity and care of a parent's house—the want of which, alas, is too often the occasion of the first guilty step—or a home like the Refuge, affording the best substitute for parental tenderness, can successfully invite the wanderer to return.

It will be perceived that the primary object of the Refuge is not preventive—that its efforts bear only indirectly upon the tremendous and wide-spread evil of licentiousness. The Directors of this institution have undertaken only to open a way of escape to those who are disposed to forsake the paths of infamy, and to facilitate

their return to virtue and respectability. Experience has given strength to this view of the subject, while it has confirmed the Directors in the opinion, that aside from the great good which, through the operations of the Refuge, may be accomplished in individual cases, a salutary and restraining influence is at the same time exerted upon the vice of licentiousness in general. Nothing can be more erroneous than the opinion which has obtained—although the Directors cannot believe it prevails to any considerable extent—that institutions like the Refuge have a tendency rather to encourage and increase, than to lessen vice. If it be true that licentiousness is an evil which from its very nature cannot be successfully assailed by the severe and uncompromising operation of law, it follows that persuasive moral means are those only upon which reliance can be placed. Such means, it is true, must be gradual in their application and results—in the present case particularly so; so much so, indeed, as very naturally to occasion discouragement, if not distrust; but under the blessing of God they are certain to be in some degree successful. Efforts of this character, such as are now employed by the Refuge, it is believed, will go as far as any thing can to bring about that desirable state of society and of public sentiment, in which more direct and sure means shall effect the entire eradication of a vice which is now sapping the foundations of society, and plunging so many in irremediable ruin.

The means relied upon for reformation, are constant employment, and faithful moral and religious instruction. In addition to sewing, and the ordinary work of a family, in which they are employed and instructed, they are taught to read and write—many, when they are received into the institution, being entirely ignorant in these respects. Private reading of the Scriptures, every day, is enjoined upon the inmates, and sufficient time is allowed them for this purpose. Besides the constant religious

instructions and example of the Superintendents, a committee of the Directors visit often, and occasionally hold religious services in the family, and a committee of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society visit every week, for similar purposes, and for conversation with the inmates individually. Religious worship is constantly held in the Refuge, every Sunday, both morning and evening; and the stated services of a clergyman are obtained, for at least a part of the day.

The residence of the inmates in the Refuge is altogether voluntary. Any one is received on probation, who professes a desire to reform, on application either to one of the Directors, or to the Ladies' Committee, or at the House, unless there should be something in the circumstances of the case to make it very clear that she is not a proper subject of the care of the institution. The monthly committee of Directors either decide upon her full admission at their first subsequent visit, or they require a longer probation, as they judge best. On her full admission, each inmate promises to conform to all the regulations of the House, and to remain in it until the Directors shall think proper to procure a place for her.

It has always been regarded as an object of great importance to provide places, for such of the inmates as may not be restored to their friends, in pious families in the country; and generally they have given good satisfaction, in the families to which they have gone.

The Directors take occasion to acknowledge the indebtedness of the institution to the Managers of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society, for their very efficient coöperation, in promoting in various ways the object in view; and especially for their constant regard to the individual welfare of the inmates, and the important assistance rendered to the Superintendents in the management of the internal affairs of the Refuge.

The Directors would also take the opportunity to ex-

press their confidence in the fidelity and competency of the present Superintendents of the Refuge. Their long experience, and their devotedness to the cause, qualify them in the highest degree for the discharge of the self-denying and arduous duties of their station.

The annual expenses of the institution in its present state, amount to about $1,500, including interest on the debt contracted for the purchase of the house, for the security of which the estate is mortgaged. The earnings of the inmates are usually about five hundred dollars per annum. Without enlarging the operations of the institution, therefore, the sum needed for its support is about $1,000 per year. This has been raised by subscriptions, solicited generally by the Directors, and the contributions have been confined to a small number of individuals. The Directors, anxious for the continuance and even enlargement of the institution, are not free from embarrassment as to future provision for funds. The difficulty of presenting the subject to the public, and obtaining a general contribution, must be apparent to every one. The course hitherto pursued by the Directors, of personal solicitation, it is also obvious, is too difficult and uncertain to be relied upon. It has been suggested to the Directors, that a more suitable and successful course would be to leave the collection of funds entirely to the Board of Directors of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society, it being supposed that the peculiar claims of the Refuge could be presented by them with more propriety and efficiency. The experiment will be made, and subscriptions and donations will hereafter be solicited exclusively by the ladies.

With these statements and views, the Directors submit the cause of the Boston Penitent Females' Refuge to an enlightened and benevolent public, earnestly inviting their aid in carrying forward a design which must commend itself to the friends of virtue and human happiness.

To the Christian community especially, they would present their appeal, and assure them, as they confidently do, that no object is more worthy of the sympathies of the followers of Him who wept over Jerusalem, and that there is no effort of Christian benevolence, in which they can more certainly call down upon themselves the blessing of those ready to perish.

June, 1839.

THE PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE

OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

Incorporated by an Act of the Legislature of Massachusetts, in the year 1823.

CONSTITUTION.

ART. 1. This Society shall be known by the name of the Penitent Females' Refuge in the City of Boston.

ART. 2. Any person who shall subscribe and pay annually, at least two dollars, for a term not less than three years, shall be a member of the Society during that time; and by the payment of twenty-five dollars, a person may become a member for life. All those who shall have acted as Directors since the incorporation of the Society, shall also be regarded as permanent members, unless they decline; and the Society shall have power to elect other members at any regular meeting, on the nomination of the Board of Directors.

ART. 3. The annual meeting, for the choice of officers, by ballot, shall be held on the first Thursday in the month of February.

ART. 4. The officers of this Society, shall be a President, a Vice President, a Corresponding Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and ten Directors, who, together, shall be the Board of Directors; which Board, thus constituted, shall have the entire management and government of the house, and shall maintain a constant superintendence, by visits of inspection, made by some one or more of their own number, in such manner and order, as the Board shall prescribe; and shall make a report of their proceedings, and of the state of the Refuge, to the Society, at the annual meeting.

ART. 5. The Board shall meet once in each month. Five members shall constitute a quorum. They shall enact by-laws, to govern their own proceedings, and for the regulation of the Refuge.

ART. 6. The Board shall have power to fill all vacancies which may happen in their number by death, resignation, or non-attendance, and the persons so appointed, shall be members until the next annual meeting.

ART. 7. The Corresponding Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Society, under the direction of the Board.

ART. 8. The Recording Secretary shall keep a fair record of the proceedings of the Board, and of the Society. He shall also notify the members of all meetings.

ART. 9. The Treasurer shall take charge of all moneys and other property belonging to the Society, and keep a just and fair copy of all his receipts and expenditures. He shall not pay out moneys on account of the institution, except by order of the Directors. His books of account shall be open for inspection, by any member of the Society, at all regular meetings. He shall also make a full report of the state of the funds at the annual meeting. He shall give satisfactory bonds for the faithful performance of the duties of his office.

ART. 10. No person shall be employed to superintend the Refuge, but such as are well reported as persons of discretion and practical Christian piety.

ART. 11. Any four members of the Board may require a special meeting, either of the Board or of the Society.

ART. 12. This Constitution may not be altered, but at the annual meeting; such alteration having been presented in writing to the Board of Directors at a regular monthly meeting.

OFFICERS.

HENRY HOMES, *President.*
ENOCH HALE, *Vice President.*
G. W. BLAGDEN, *Corresponding Secretary.*
FERDINAND ANDREWS, *Rec. Secretary.*
HENRY CLARK, *Treasurer.*

Directors.

GEORGE DENNY,
BENJAMIN PERKINS,
THOMAS ADAMS,
A. A. GOULD,
ALBERT HOBART,
ARTEMAS SIMONDS,
LEMUEL P. GROSVENOR,
JOSEPH TRACY,
SAMUEL TENNY,
DANIEL SAFFORD.

OFFICERS

OF THE

LADIES' AUXILIARY REFUGE SOCIETY.

Mrs. WILLIAM MINOT, *President.*
" HENRY HOMES, *Vice President.*
" M. L. O'BRIEN, *Secretary.*
" JOSEPH JENKINS, *Treasurer.*

Managers.

Mrs. WILLIAM MINOT,
" JAMES LORING,
" L. T. COOK,
" C. H. JONES,
" J. C. PROCTOR,
" D. NOYES,
Mrs. H. HOMES,
" N. GURNEY,
" H. J. HOLBROOK,
" CALVIN HAVEN,
" D. SAFFORD,
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(Nov., 1891, 20,000)

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